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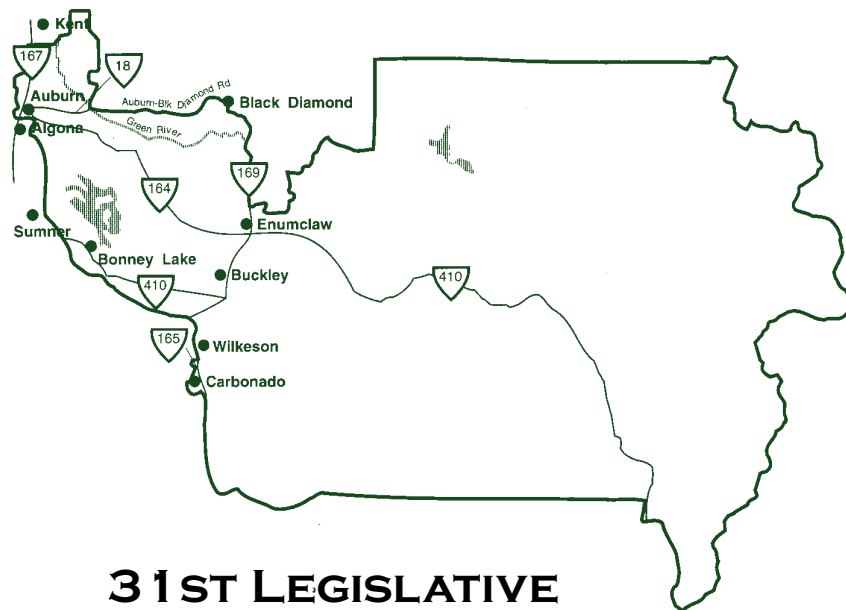
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 31

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SPECIAL REPORT AND UPDATE TO SENIORS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DAN ROACH

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



REP. DAN ROACH 31ST DISTRICT

REPORT TO SENIORS

Dear friends,

My prayers go out to you, and your family, and to everyone in the state who has been affected by the recent tragedy. While the international events are out of our direct control here in Washington, they are having a tremendous impact on our state economy and state government. We are doing everything possible as a state government to support President Bush as he responds to this threat to our nation.

I want you to know that all of the calls and letters to my office are very much appreciated, and I encourage you to keep communicating with me.

There were many issues in the last legislative session that will have an impact on senior citizens in our community. We had many successes and this newsletter is meant to provide a complete report on these important legislative issues.

As your state legislator, you have my commitment that senior citizen issues will always be at the top of my legislative agenda. My door is open, so please let me know how I can help.

Again, thank you very much for your calls and letters.

Sincerely,

Dan Roach
Your State Representative



PROGRESS FOR SENIORS IN THE STATE BUDGET

When it comes to fiscal matters, including the state budget, I believe government needs to learn to spend the hard-earned money of taxpayers better than it has been. I also believe that government must make tough choices and set priorities. One of state government's top priorities must be helping senior citizens.

Meeting the long-term care needs of seniors was an important part of the state operating budget which passed this year. While I did not support many aspects of the budget this year, there were many important victories for senior citizens, including:

- Funding to increase nursing services for individuals living in their own homes.
- A wage increase for long-term care workers.
- Funding to increase the average daily nursing home rate by nearly 10 percent.
- Funding to pay higher rates to boarding homes that provide specialized dementia services.
- Authorization to develop two Medicaid waiver programs to serve Medically Needy individuals in home and community settings.

And during budget negotiations, we were also able to stop proposed reductions in the adult day health program. This is an important victory for the many seniors in our community who rely on this program.

MAKING LONG-TERM CARE A LEADING PRIORITY

I am concerned about the number of seniors in our community who are not receiving the long-term care they so desperately need. From my own experiences, I know the importance of long-term care and will continue to fight for seniors in the Legislature.

We did make significant progress this session to strengthen Washington's long-term care program. Key legislation that passed included:

- SB 5184, to help prevent abuse, authorized Aging and Adult Services Administration (AASA) to share the results of Adult Protective Services investigations to prospective employers of caregivers.
- SHB 1426 authorized AASA to send quality improvement

consultants into boarding homes to facilitate "resident-centered" care.

- HB 1341 expanded access and controls costs for those who otherwise have no alternatives to nursing home placements.
- SHB 1320 required adult family home providers and newly hired resident managers to have at least a high school diploma or GED, as well as meet other education and health requirements. This will improve quality of care and safety in residential settings.

HELP WITH SKYROCKETING UTILITY BILLS

No one was spared from skyrocketing electricity bills this past year. That's why the Legislature approved \$1 million in state funds for low-income energy assistance and authorized an additional \$4 million in federal funds through the Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program.

The money from this program will be available almost immediately for the families and seniors who are being hit hard by rising energy costs this winter and spring. Those families and individuals who might qualify for low-income energy assistance can contact their local utility or community action network.

PROTECTING SENIORS FROM IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft can destroy a person's good name and credit, and it's reaching epidemic proportions around our state. It is both sad and personally devastating, but seniors are increasingly the victims of identity theft. Statewide, it is one of the few crimes that increased last year, and Washington is consistently ranked among the top five states nationwide for this crime.

We are making every effort in the Legislature to fight back against identity thieves. In 1999, lawmakers established the crime of identity theft. Then in May of this year, we approved legislation expanding the definition of identity theft, and placing additional restrictions on collection agencies and credit reporting agencies.

This is only a beginning. I also supported a proposal to create an identity theft bureau within the Washington State Patrol to track down and prosecute crooks, as well as assist the victims of identity theft. This legislation was blocked by House Democrats, with whom we share a 49-49 split in the House, but will support the same legislation again next year.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FROM THE WASHINGTON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE TO PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY:

- **Do not give your Social Security number, mother's maiden name or account numbers to strangers who contact you, especially by phone, Internet or mail.**
- **Pay attention to what time of month your bills arrive.** If they don't arrive on time, call the creditor to make sure an identity thief hasn't changed your billing address to keep you from discovering phony charges.
- **Guard your mail from theft.** Don't leave outgoing mail in your mailbox.
- **Put passwords on your credit card, bank and phone accounts.**
- **Don't carry your Social Security card.** Leave it in a secure place.
- **Don't carry credit cards or ID cards you don't need.**
- **Tear or shred charge receipts, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, physician statements, bank checks and statements, expired charge cards and credit offers you get in the mail.**
- **If you want to inspect your credit report, order a copy from each of the three major consumer reporting agencies.** Make sure it is accurate.

For more information, visit the Attorney General's web site at <http://www.wa.gov/ago/consumer> or call their consumer line at 1-800-551-4636.

REDUCING PROPERTY TAXES

Property tax relief is a chief priority of mine. Last session, I sponsored and supported proposals both to restrict the growth of, as well as reduce, property taxes, and will continue supporting such legislation in the future. Because many seniors live on fixed retirement incomes, I would like to see low-income seniors and retired persons exempted from the entire state portion of their property taxes.

A family home should remain a family home. Its time we stopped hearing about seniors having to sell their houses because they simply cannot afford rising property taxes combined with higher home values.

The state budget will be a primary issue for lawmakers in the upcoming 2002 session. Rest assured, I will continue looking for new ways to enact common-sense property tax relief for all families, including fixed- and low-income seniors.